

OF THE <sup>13</sup>  
Rule of Faith  
A  
SERMON.

At the Visitation of the Right Reverend  
Father in God, *WILLIAM* Lord  
Bishop of *Lincolne*, holden at  
*Bedford August 3.*  
*1674.*

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By *William Jackson* D. D.

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C A M B R I D G E,

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S<sup>r</sup> Jude verse 3.

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needfull for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints.*

**O**F how fatal consequence to the Peace of the Church, and the Purity of our Christian Faith the Licentious Preaching of *Dissenters* hath been, we have had a late, and a wofull experience ; ( Warning enough surely not to trust them again : ) Having seen, not onely the Government, and Discipline of the Church broken down, and all the Articles of our Creed batter'd by whole Legions of Heresies ; But also the first Article, the very foundation of all

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Religion taken away too; That it hath been by wise men of late thought a necessary work to prove that there is a God; and to resume the Primitive Employment of writing Apologies, and defences for the Truth, and Excellency of Christian Religion, as if we had been reformed into the Heathenism of our Fore-fathers.

And, though by the mercy of God, and the presence of his Anointed, we have for some years had the Government of the Church restored, and the Solemn Worship of God returned to our Publick Assemblies, yet we do not see, that the minds of the People generally, are rested upon that firm basis of *the Ancient, Catholique and Holy Faith*, from which they were once so tumultuously removed: Those contrary winds of Doctrine, that raised that heavy storm, are not yet laid; and so long as men take so much liberty of Indulgence, God knows when they will: But till then, it can never be unnecessary, or improper, especially in such an Assembly as this, to make use of this verse of *S: Jude* with the variation of one word onely, *Beloved, when I gave all dili-*



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*diligence to preach unto you of the common Salvation, it was needfull for me to preach unto you, and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.*

The Text is plain enough to the meanest capacity, onely some, that think they have a peculiar interest in the word *Saints*, may be mistaken; for by that word is meant in plain English, *Christians*, those that are baptized into the faith of Christ; for so the word *ἁγιοι*, spoken of persons in this life generally signifies in the new Testament, and in the Text, being used in the plural number, seems to denote the Collective body of them, *the Church*. And then *faith* being taken *objectivè*, for the matters or things to be believed, *The faith once delivered to the Saints* is those Doctrines, which it pleased God in one set time to reveal, and to deposite as a standing Rule of Faith in the Church for ever.

There are in the words three things generally observable.

I. The nature and immutability of the Rule of Faith; *the Faith once delivered unto the Saints.*

II. The

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II. The way and means to preserve this, as it was first delivered; *that ye should earnestly contend.*

III. The Importance and necessity of so doing; *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needfull for me to write unto you, and exhort you---*

1. For the *Rule of Faith*. This must needs be the word of God, in what manner soever revealed, by what means soever made known to us to be such; as might easily be proved to any that do believe there is a God. And therefore it is,

1. A word, that is some Doctrine or Divine truths, that we are to believe. For it is an <sup>a</sup> *Intellectuall Rule*, or a Rule to the understanding, which is to suspend or give assent to the Doctrines of Religion, so far as they disagree, or accord with this Rule. Now, seeing there is no belief, but of something that is affirmed or denied; there can be no Rule of this, but onely some Doctrines, or propositions presupposed as true, and taken for granted before hand. And this is the way of all Arts and Sciences, which contain such diversity of objects for our belief, and under-

<sup>a</sup> Sire Foot.  
D. fe. 1. Para.  
17.

understanding; Every one of them hath some fundamentall Maxims or Propositions, upon which the whole body is afterward raised, and in Contradiction to which nothing is to be taken for true in the respective science. Now the Doctrine of Christian Religion being the most reasonable Doctrine in the world, is questionless also the most regular and Methodicall, hath in it as much certainty and evidence of a regular Method, as is in any science, and more; and would so appear to us, had we as clear a comprehension of it, as we have of other doctrines. And therefore agreeably, this Phrase *The Rule of Faith*, is not to be taken *Causally* or *Formally*, as if we sought for a Measure antecedent to the fundamentall points of our Belief, to try them by; but it is to be taken *Subjektivè*, or *Materially*, that is, a Rule consisting of the fundamentall points of Faith, and a formall Rule to determine controversies, and to condemn Heresies by. This was the sense of it, both name and thing, when it came first into use among the Fathers in the Primitive Church, as may be seen by <sup>b</sup> *Irenæus*, <sup>b</sup> *Lib. 1. capp. 2, 3.*  
<sup>c</sup> *Terenti-*

<sup>c</sup>De Præscript. Regula est autem fidei, ut jam hinc, quid credimus defendamus, illa scilicet, quæ creditur unum omnino deum esse---- Hæc regula à Christo---Instituta nullas habet apud nos quaestiones, nisi quas Hæreses inferunt, & quæ Hæreticos faciunt. Ceterum, maneat forma ejus in suo ordine, quantum libet quaras & tractes--- Fides in regulâ posita est--- Cedit Curiositas Fidei--- Certè aut non obstrepant, aut quiescant adversus Regulam. Idem de Veland. Virg. Regula quidem fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis, & irreformabilis, credendi scilicet in unicum Deum omnipotentem mundi Conditorum---

<sup>d</sup>Serm. de temp. 119. Symbolum est breviter complexa Regula fidei - Idem de fide & symbolo. Idem de Genesi ad litteram. Catholica fides-- Est hæc Deum Patrem omnipotentem universam creaturam fecisse. Idem similiter pluries alibi.

<sup>e</sup>Adversus Valentin. 'Η εὐθεὶα τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν--- Παρὰ τῶν Ἀποστόλων--- Παράβουσι τὴν εἰς ἑνὰ Θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα τὸν πατοῦντά τὸν υἱόν. Πίς, καὶ εἰς ἑνὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱόν.--- Contra Marcionem versus finem. In Ancoræ versus finem. In compendiarîâ verâ doctrinâ. De fide Catholica & Apostolica Ecclesiæ. In Marcelli fide conscriptâ.

<sup>f</sup>Ad Cledonium adversus Apollinarium Orat. 52. Fidem Nicanam vocat συντομίαν θούνην, καὶ καὶ ὅσα. Vide sequentia ibid. Idem Contra Julian. Orat. 3.

<sup>g</sup>Epist. ad Pulcheriam August. Siquidem ipsa Catholici Symboli brevis & perfecta confessio--- Tam instructa sit munitione cælesti, ut omnes Hæreticorum opiniones solo ipsius gladio possunt detruncari: Hujus symboli plenitudinem si Eutiches---

reason

<sup>c</sup>Tertullian, <sup>d</sup>St Austin, <sup>e</sup>Epiphanius, <sup>f</sup>Nazianzen, & Leo, and the rest of them that treat of the Christian Faith; Till of late upon the Popes pretensions to an infallible Judicature, the words have been wrested from their primitive sense, to signify *the arguments and motives* that perswade us to entertain the Christian Doctrine it self in gross, or more especially the chief parts of it; for this seems to be the meaning of them in the Controversie at this day. But these Arguments, or Motives, whether from Reason or Authority are antecedent to this Rule, the ground and means of coming to it, not the Rule it self; otherwise we should have as many Rules of Faith, as we have arguments from

reason or authority, why we believe. Indeed, if we take the word *Faith* for our *Act of believing*, a Christians Faith hath this in Common with all other belief, that the Rule, and the object matter of it are the same thing: For the immediate limit, and measure of all belief, is, and must be the apparent truth of the thing proposed; beyond which our assent cannot go without Error, or believing a falsehood; nor can it fall short of it without infidelity, or want of due belief: & these two properties make a Rule in the most adæquate, and exact sense. But then, nothing can have this apparent truth rightly, and Regularly farther, than as it is consonant to those propositions, on which the truth of it depends, and by which it is to be tried, as by a Rule: So that if men would speak properly and distinctly, as certainly they ought to do in Controversies, especially of this grand importance, by this question, *what is the Rule of Faith?* can onely be meant, *what, or where are the points, articles or Propositions, that are fundamentall in the faith of the Church?* For, as to points not fundamentall, they depend upon those that are, and therefore

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do not come primarily into the question. I would not trouble you with so much Metaphysicks, but that they are of so necessary use to clear the foundation of our Faith from that rubbish, and confusion, which the sophistry and petulancy of our Adversaries have thrown upon it; who in this point make it their business to confound the Notion of a Rule, and a Judge; and then all those arguments that prove the necessity of an infallible Rule, are easily brought to prove an infallible Judge, a *Viva regula fides* which some of them make such a noise and a clamor with; as if a person and a proposition were the same thing. This gives also an easie answer to those of them, that tell us, *The Apostles went not with books in their hands to preach and deliver Christs doctrine, but with words in their Mouths*, that the Scripture is a dead letter, and much other civil language of the like nature, as they are pleased to give it. It is not, you see, either the letter of Scripture, or the sound of the Apostles preaching, which is the Rule of our Faith; but the great Doctrines, which they preach't, which were afterwards written;

Sure foot.  
Disc. 4. Par. 5.

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II

ten; and is the same Rule of faith, I trow, whether conveyed to us by writing or without it; as *Irenaeus* tells us of some Christians, that had no written word at all. Lib. 3. Cap. 4.

2. *The Rule of Faith* is the word of God, who is our Creator, and supreme Lawgiver, and the Author, and object of that immortall happiness, to which true faith leads us.

The word of God is indeed a glorious Title, and therefore no wonder that so many have laid claim to it. It would, I confess, look something like an adventure, to range at large through the history of all times and places, in quest of that, which was but once delivered: And yet did the time give us leave to be exact, it would be necessary to examine the claims of, at least, the most vogue, and considerable pretenders. There was never yet any Lawgiver in the world, that did not bear the People in hand, that his Laws were dictated and given, at least ratified and authorised by the Deity: But of all these, there is none, except them whose history is in the Bible, that have not been known, and  
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laught at for fables by the most able, and greatest maintainers of them. Those in the Bible are chiefly two, which make up the two volumes of it respectively; The one, a Revelation made to the Jews by *Moses*, the other, to all Mankind by *Christ Jesus*. The first of these appears to any understanding Reader to be wholly relative, and propheticall; consisting of Prophecies, and other Præsignifications of a great Lawgiver and Prince, that was not to appear, till the world had attended his coming 4000 years. The second volume contains the historicall relation of the life and *gesta* of that great Prince, and the travels of his Ministers: And therefore our Faith was not, nor could be delivered sooner, because the chief contents, and matter of it are the conception, birth, speeches, actions, and sufferings of this *Great One*. And so *S. Jude's* phrase of *once delivered* is to be understood, of *that one age*, when this Divine Person the Son of God, was incarnate, suffered death, rose again from death, and did actually perform, and transact all those passages and events, which are the object matter of  
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our Faith, and Creed; and also when this, and all the rest was preached, and attested by them, that had seen these things done, and had Especiall Commission from him to propose them, as matters of Faith to all the world. And therefore our Rule of Faith is contained in the Narrative of Our Saviours pilgrimage, and his Apostles preaching; that is, in the four Gospels, in the Epistles, and Acts of the Apostles; which were all extant in *St. Iudes* time in writing, and this writing taken for an *undoubted Rule of Faith* by the Church, and therefore alone called *canonicall*: and so continued, till the many and monstrous changes made in the Faith by the Church of *Rome* made it necessary for them to look out for another Rule: Wherein how well they have acquitted themselves, shall be seen by and by.

In the mean while, her single testimony ought not to overballance so great a cloud of Witnesses, as have deposed, even life it self for the Scripture, and against her own judgement for much above 1000 years. Especially, if it be added what arguments the present Church of *Rome* affords, to prove that *the Rule of Faith* is contained in the Holy Scripture.

I. In

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I. In the judgement of the Church of Rome it contains all necessary points of Faith, and therefore contains *the Rule of Faith*. Look over their Divinity-writers of all Sorts, Especially of Controversies and bo-dyes of Divinity, The decrees and Cate-chisme of the Council of *Trent*; You will find them, as well as we, labouring to prove their main points out of this written Word; Yea, the very infallibility of the Pope, and such other doctrines, as they set up against the Scripture.

And this they do in the first place, as may be seen in *Bellarmino*, and other their best writers, as fetching their prime foundation from thence. Nor have they been so bold as to say, that they make use of Scripture onely *ad hominem*, and not that they believe it; For however they may deal with us in Controversie, it is to be hoped they are more faithfull to the Souls of their own People. So that, would they be true to their own Consciences, and the Consciences of their flocks, they must return to the Rule of Faith contained in Scripture, and confess with the said *Bellarmino*, that *Sacra Scriptura* is *Regula credendi certissima & tutissima*, The most certain and safe Rule of believing: That so all Christendom might once again, if possible,

*De Verbo Dei.*  
*lib. 1. cap. 2.*

fible, have *one Faith*.

II. The Rule of Faith in the Church of Rome is contained in the Holy Scriptures, or else they have none; Yes, may some say, The Church of Rome in full Council teaches us, that her Faith is contained in *libris scriptis, & sine scripto traditionibus*, in the Concil. Triden. Sess. 4. written word, and in unwritten traditions; But then they must mean, either, that some of their Articles of Faith are contained in the written word, and othersome in unwritten traditions onely; or, that all their Articles are proved, partly from the written word, and partly from unwritten traditions. Not the first, for they endeavour to prove all out of Scripture, as was shewed even now; Not the second, for Divine warrant from the written word (if they have it) is surely a sufficient Basis for any, or all the Articles of their Faith; and tradition or the voice of the Church, being but an humane testimony, cannot cause a Divine infallible Faith. Yes, The testimony of the Church, say they, is divine and infallible. But here they lie cross one to another: For, by the voice of the Church, some of them mean a traditional delivery of the Faith from age to age without writing, as the Roman Catholick writers of *England* especially: Others mean  
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the voice or sentence of the present Pope or Church, as the great Pontiff and Court of *Rome* with the Jesuits, and other their close Adherents : And these are as profess adversaries to one another, as they are to us : Those laying the stress upon the indefectibility of Oral, and Practical tradition : These upon an infallible assistance given to the present Pope, or Church. And so far hath the opposition between them proceeded, that our Countrey-men have been, about twelve years since, condemn'd at *Rome* of Heresie by a solemn censure of the Inquisition, for their stiff maintaining tradition in opposition to the present Infallibility : And on the other side, they of *Rome* have been condemn'd by them in *England*, for their illimited Pretences to Infallibility. And which is worst of all, both have forsaken the Faith of their *Trent-Fathers* ; For they profess to receive the written word, and unwritten traditions *pari Pietatis affectu, & Reverentiâ*, with equal devotion, and submission ; But our assertors of Tradition are for it alone in opposition to the Scripture ; and the pretenders to a present Infallibility think themselves able to overrule both Scripture and Tradition. Whereby you may see, that since they have quitted the old founda-

*Ibid.*

foundation, they have not been able to fix any, that all their members can agree in: And withall may be seen, how necessary an implicite Faith is for those, that will be of the Romish Communion; since, did they use but half an eye, they must needs discover, instead of *A Guide in Controversies*, an endless Maze: wherein, it is no wonder, that many, even of the greatest Wits, lose all Religion, and take up in Atheism.

But we have many and greater arguments for this point; more, and more convincing, then for any one point, either in Reason, or Religion, except it be for the Existence of a God. It will be impossible to speak to all, and it will be too great an ingratitude to the goodness of God to omit all: I shall therefore mention two or three of them.

I. This book alone contains a *Doctrine, and institution without error*, and which therefore by vertue of that qualification can alone be an *infallible Rule of our Faith*. It is strange to consider, that for so long a time as it hath been in the world, so much read, and canvass'd, and written upon, more then any other book whatsoever; nay, I might say, but that it would look like a solæcism, more then all other books put together, so many *Commentaries, Annotations, Paraphrases, Versions, Animadversions, Scholæ critica, & Anticritica, Collationes, Lucubrationes, Dis-*

*atriba, Exercitationes, Myrothecia, Antitheses,* and a hundred more sorts of disquisitions, and discussions of the truth of it: Yet not the least error, or misprision of error hath been found in it. An abundant proof, that there is none in it, that it is the dictate of an infallible understanding, which could not be put forth into the world for any other end, then to be a *standing, and infallible Rule to Mankind*, who is of their naturall condition confessedly overrun with Error.

II. The Scripture contains the onely doctrine, that ever could prevail upon Mankind in that way, which the Rule of Faith onely doth, and can prevail; And that is, by the strength and power of the light and truth, that shines in it; and by the assistance of that Almighty arm, which never vouchsafed to give the Testimony of a Miracle to any thing, but to Truths of the greatest Consequence. Did it not, think you, seem strange to those that lived in the times, when it was first published, and did observe a doctrine so unlikely to take, either with the weakness and humour of Mankind in Generall, or with the pomp and powers of the world in Particular, as the worship of a poor beggerly Jew, which was our Saviours condition while he lived, and a crucified and derided Malefactor, which were the terms, whereon he suffered? That this weak,

weak, and creeping pretender unarm'd, and unattended by any, but poor and ignorant men, that in worldly respects were indeed (as they confess'd of themselves) the very refuse of Mankind, like Master, like Apostles; That it should notwithstanding, in less then fifty years, obtain so great and universall an Interest in all parts of the world, as to shake, and in few years after to overthrow all Religions, that had had so long undisturbed, and unquestioned possession; Maugre that multitude of Priests, and Dæmons by which they were maintained, and all that might, and opposition which the supream Powers of the world, the malice and cunning of the devil, yea, the very bent, and inclination of all Mankind could set against it; And this without any humane helps, but onely the bare preaching and proposall of it; Which from the mouths of such ragged, and forlorn Commissioners, as were employed, must, and did much prejudice the promotion of it. Especially, considering what absolute obedience it required of bringing down, even every imagination; and what hard terms is propos'd of mortification, taking up the Cross, and forsaking all that was before counted dear in this world; and, which is hardest of all, requiring self condemnation, and that in instances of greater and more pungent concernment, then the

1 Cor. 4. 11.

S. Mar. 13. 40.



world had before been acquainted with. What could any sober man in those days judge from these things, and many more of the like Nature, but that it was a Doctrine given by the Supream Lord, and Lawgiver of the World to be an *absolute Rule*, both of *Faith*, and practice to all the World ?

III. The Scripture contains that doctrine, which alone of all doctrines, that ever were publish't, doth entirely agree with the Soul of Man, and with the principles of reason within him ; And which consequently can alone be an infallible help to his understanding, and *propose a Rule of Faith* to him. It teaches us the same lessons, that we learn from the light of Nature ; that there is a God, that he made the World, and governs it, that he punishes the Evil, and rewards the Good. It instructs us in the knowledge and belief of these, and many more such doctrines, more clearly and convincingly then all the Philosophy in the World ; so fully and undeniably, as force the Soul to have what arguments and discourses she drawes from her own bottom, and to betake her self to this word, as the only safe and impregnable rock, and hold of Truth. It informs, and extricates our Souls from those errors, and perplexities concerning our own nature and condition, which reason makes us sensible of, but can neither remedy,

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nor clearly discover. In all the infinitely various, and entangled Cases, wherein men are concerned, it never so much as once crosses their reason or understanding, but always helps it forward. It is the onely Doctrine, that ever taught mankind to abstract from the world, to disengage Religion from worldly designs, and temptations; without which it is impossible, that our understanding should attain the full liberty of judging, or the true measures of believing. It calls up the mind to those sublime and heavenly contemplations, to that divine and inflaming ardour; as force reason to stand at a distance, and acknowledge, that her most refined and studied wits, her most severe Stoicks and Recluses had not so much, as the husks of that fruit, which this Tree of knowledge and life affords; That the strength of all her productions, were they never so genuine, cannot enrich her votaries with so true and solid learning, with so pure and charming a holiness, with so firm and delicious a happiness, as the meanest of the students of this Book are enabled to attain. It propounds mysteries of so high and glorious a nature, with so much *Naisvetie*, so much clear & native perspicuity, and so much commanding and dreadfull Majesty, as cannot be communicated any whence, but from that infinite and eternall Wisdom, who is alone  
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able, as to discover and reveal, so to comprehend fully the Mysteries contained in the Scripture. Mysteries so much above our weak reason, so attractive of it, and so healing to it; as may from their own nature and merit claim and exercise the Energy, and Authority of a *Rule of Faith*.

IV. Lastly, Scripture contains the onely doctrine, that ever could obtain to give law to all the world, and the first that ever pretended to so large a Jurisdiction. But *the Rule of Faith*, as it is absolute, & admits of no appeal; so the extent of it is illimited and universall, over all Persons to whom it is made known, of what nation, age, quality, or pretence soever: And that, both in respect of the contents of it, which are of a like importance to all to receive, and believe; as of that power by which it stands, which is a like Soverain over all. Now call to mind what was done in the world for the first 4000 years, at the end whereof this Doctrine was revealed, and you will find as many Lawgivers, and Masters of Religion almost, as Countries; Nor have there been since any pretenders to an *Universal Monarchy in Religion*, besides his Infallible Holiness of Rome, and the Seraphick Author of the Alcoran; But *S. Jude* tells us, this Faith was delivered when he wrote his Epistle, and therefore both these are cut out by a far elder claim. And the Antients

cients made use of this very Topick, *viz.* The universall extent of the Gospel, to prove that main point of Faith, on which the rest depends, namely, the Divinity of Christ the Author of it.

No Book ever came neer that high pitch of historicall credit, that this hath had ever since it was publish't: And he, that brings but that belief with him to the reading of it, cannot upon reading, but believe it is Divine, and look for a Rule of Faith in it.

In a word, it hath the two Essentiall properties required in a Rule, *Certainty in it self, and Evidence to us*; both which appear *a Posteriori*, from the constant Consent of all Churches in one abstract of things fundamentall to Salvation taken out of it: And we have as much proof, that it is to be such, as we can possibly have, suppose it were so.

And now surely it may seem a strange presumption in flesh and blood, to attempt to put down *this Oracle* from that præminence, and power over the Faith of Christendom, wherein the Almighty did at first place it, and wherein it hath by undoubted possession prescribed for so many ages since. An attempt, that could not have entred into the hearts of men; if extream, and overgrown corruption both in Faith and manners, had not first thrown out all fear of him, who hath threatned

threatned utter excision to all them, that dare add to, or detract from his word. To him we must leave them, who will stand by his own word, and bring to light the hidden things of dishonesty; and consider what returns of duty become us, and they are especially three.

I. The first is that, which is to appear in us in the first place upon the receipt of any mercy, or blessing whatsoever; and that is thankfulness, and gratitude, that we offer up a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and that for this it be a daily sacrifice, because this word is of more necessary, and frequent use to us, then our daily bread.

II. A chearfull, and absolute resignation of our Faith, and Understanding to it.

III. A zealous, and unwearied endeavour to keep, and maintain this Faith whole, and untainted in all trialls and oppositions.

The third we are now to speak to, expressed by *s. Jude*, in these two words, *Contend earnestly*, which jointly imploy these two things.

1. The use of all means necessary to attain so noble an end.

2. Zeal, and perseverance in the use of them.

I. The means most likely to preserve our Faith are, I conceive, these that follow.

1. The Preservation of the letter of Scripture intire and uncorrupt, and a diligent study of the literall meaning of it; For we do

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2<sup>d</sup> Head

not by *the Scripture* understand the bare characters abstracted from the sense, as a bold *Se-  
jeant* of the Church of *Rome* is pleased to say of us, but by what Authority appears not; Possibly it may be some remnant of his weak Faith before his defection, which by his defection seems to have gone no farther, then the bare characters, never to have been well grounded in the true sense and meaning of it. We mean by *Scripture* the literall sense of it, especially in the points fundamentall to Salvation; which are the very points of Faith, *not*, as he saith, *of which this Rule of Faith is to ascertain us*, but of which it consists, which make it up, as the parts make the whole. These, we say, are contained in the first, and most obvious sense of the words of Scripture; God being graciously pleased to lay them open to all capacities, and so making it a *common Salvation*, as *S. Jude* here calls it: As common reason will teach us, that any Writer, that would be understood, will endeavour to deliver the main parts, and substance of his discourse most plainly, and expressly. And therefore it is no wonder, that the mysticall exposition of plain Scripture prov'd so mischievous to the Faith of the Ancient Church. But so long as we have *the letter of Scripture* whole, and understand the literall meaning of it, so long we have *our Rule of Faith* safe. I shall not

Sure foot.  
Disc. 2. par. 2.

Ibid.

need to tell you, how both the one, and other are best done: by a study of the Originals of both Testaments, by comparing the severall ancient Copies, Versions, and Paraphrases, especially *the Septuagint*, and *the Chaldee Paraphrast*; by observing the various readings and applications of places, as we find them scatter'd in the writings of the Fathers, and many other ways, wherein you are better experienced than my self.

2. To preserve the Faith, it is necessary to distinguish in the Scripture points fundamentall from those which are not so. This was proposed by the wise and learned *King James*, as the best expedient for ending the Controversies of Christendom. For as no book or doctrine; so especially, not the doctrine of the Scripture can be well understood, much less maintain'd, without an Analysis, separation, and digestion of the parts of it: It being a Collection of the writings of so many Pen-men, and those written upon severall occasions, no one regularly delivering the whole Faith. Now by *Fundamentall points* we do not mean necessary for all to know and believe to Salvation: for to some more, to some fewer, are necessary, according to their severall abilities, and opportunities; But we mean points principall, and most essentiall in respect of the whole System of the doctrine  
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of Salvation, such as are necessary to make up the Unity of the Faith, and so constitute a Church. A perfect Catalogue of these we have in the Apostles Creed, so called, as the Fathers generally tell us, because made by the Apostles before their dispersion to be a Rule in their preaching. And therefore we need not go so far for a *Rule of Faith*, or look upon it as so strange a thing, and so difficult to find, having it in our daily prayers. For this Creed is I conceive proposed in the Church of *England* to her Sons, and Daughters as a Rule of Faith, and was therefore in the beginning of the Reformation enjoined to be taught the People in English, together with the *Pater Noster*, and *Ten Commandments*, the Breviats of our *petenda*, and *agenda* respectively, as that is of our *Credenda*; And hath been therefore commanded ever since to be repeated twice a day, that we might not, if possible, be to seek in so necessary a thing, as the *Rule of Faith*. This Creed the Ancients appeal to, as to their Rule of Faith, and thought their Faith sufficiently secured, so long as this was stuck to: Especially, as it is opened in some parts by the Catholique Creeds of *Nice*, *Constantinople*, *Ephesus*, *Chalcedon*, and *Athanasius*. This way they took to defend the Faith, and with good reason, for the defence of the Articles of our Creed involves the defence of all the Catholique Doctrine;

Edw. 6.  
Injunct. 5.  
Q. Eliz.  
Injunct. 5.

Rubr. before  
the Apostles  
Creed.



As in all sciences, the principles justifie those Conclusions, that are truly made from them.

3. For the defence of the Faith it is necessary to study the old Ecclesiasticall Writers, Fathers, Councils, Historians, or whatsoever other they be; For a great part of the points of our Faith being matters of fact, such as our Saviours Birth, Death, Resurrection, &c. And our knowledge of the rest, that are not matters of fact, depending upon those that are, they must in reason be best learned from the study of those books, where they are best delivered historically; whereof Scripture is the first, and most Authentick record: And next to it, are the Christian writers of the eldest times; For what is not recorded in Scripture cannot now be expected any where but in their writings. Tradition, (whatever some men would make of it) having so early, and so grossly fail'd in the business of *Easter*, admitting infants to the Eucharist, and some other things. Besides, the many and great conflicts that they had with the Hereticks, who oppugned the chief points of Faith, give us a sight of all that can be objected against them, and of enough, though not all, that is to be said in defence of them. We do not say, they are to be read with an implicate Faith, as the Scripture is; The infallible Inspiration of the Holy Ghost being withdrawn, when the first  
Planters



Planters of the Gospel had finished their course, and left the Word written; Yet, it seems, the Holy Spirit did not take away all his extraordinary light at once, having guided them to profess, defend, and deliver to us a more pure, and unmingled Faith, and this embraced with a more fervent, and divine Love, then the following ages could boast of.

How carefully the Church of *England* hath followed the ancient Fathers in this matter of Faith, how much she relies on their judgement herein, appears from the constant allegations of her ablest defenders since the Reformation, and from her own act in Convocation, 1571; where she forbids her publick Preachers to propose any thing to the People, as matter of Faith, but that, which *Catholicæ Patres & veteres Episcopi ex S. Scriptura Doctrinâ col-*  
*legerint*, which the Ancient Pastors, and Catholick Doctors of the Church have drawn out of the Holy Scripture.

*Canon. de Con-*  
*cisionator pag. 19*

And it were no great boldness to challenge all her adversaries to show, where she hath once swerved from this Rule, or own'd any one point of Faith, which she hath not proved (after Scripture) from a full consent of the Ancient Church. To these must be added the study of the Schoolmen, and of the chief writers of all Christian Churches that are, or have been: Since, what is confess'd, that there  
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always hath been, and now is one Catholick Church, therefore one, because professing this same Rule of Faith, is to be demonstrated from the records of the severall Churches in the volumes of their Writers.

4. The fourth means is the often teaching, and explaining these chief articles, and other approved, and authorised forms of sound words to those, that are most apt to learn, and use best to remember what they learn; And they are the younger sort, to whom these points are made most intelligible by the familiar way of *Catechising*. This is doubtless, next to the inward operation of Gods grace, the best and most effectual preaching, and planting the Faith in any Soul. To these it is commonly delivered in the most plain and free manner, without any false glosses, or sophistry, which may hide or adulterate the light of it: And in these tender and untainted minds it finds the least enmity, and opposition, obtains an easie quiet, and secure possession, and growing up with them becomes a rock, and shelter against the winds of strange doctrines: Whereas on the other hand, even the reading of the written Word of God, and much more the hearing of it paraphras'd upon in popular discourses and sermons, is of far less use, often of dangerous consequence to those, that not onely want their first principles,

ciples, but it may be are leavened with false ones. And therefore it is necessary, that this be done, as was said, with *approved, and authorised forms of words*: For as the wisdom of the Church is best able to prescribe, what is generally necessary for all her members to know, and believe for their souls health; So the interest, that both Church and State have in the right principling of Youth, make it our necessary duty to teach what they prescribe: Otherwise we can never answer it to God, who hath made us accountable to them; nor can we give them any security that their people shall be brought up Orthodox in the Faith, or obedient and peaceable in the State. And it proves the better defence of the Faith, the more eminent they are, whose tender years are well seasoned; as those of the best strength of naturall parts, and quickness of wit, and inclination to learning; Those that are naturally disposed to be religious, lest they prove Zealots in a wrong way; Those that are likely to become Ministers of holy things and Stewards of this Faith; Those that are of more then ordinary quality, even in worldly respects, as Birth, Riches or Favour, especially the families of Grands, and Princes. What advantages the Jesuits, above other Orders, have made of this, is not unknown; and any one may see, that so long as these are made

made sound, and resolute for the Faith, there is the less danger of error in the rest.

5. The fifth means is by conflicting with, and suppressing all Hereticks, and *Dissenters* from the Faith, and extinguishing their Heresies, and Errors. This is properly to *Contend*, because it is against the adversaries of the Faith: And is done three ways especially.

I. By confutation of their errors; And that first, by Personall Congress, and disputation. This way our adversaries have of late been a little shy of; having found, that neither their art, nor their zeal will maintain a bad cause before Judges, who are not afore-hand at their devotion; which they of *Rome* are not to expect in a Reformed Church, and I hope the rest will no longer find in the Church of *England*. And secondly, Their writings are to be answered with writings. And this way, their Arguments have been so sifted, and run so far, that controversies are on both sides drawn to the very dregs of opposition, and nothing new hath been objected of late, that is materiall: Yet, so long as they continue their batteries, we are not to sit down in silence, but to stand upon our Guard, lest we should betray that Faith to their importunity, which hath been so well defended against their arguments.

II. The second way to suppress Heresies, is by acts of Convocation, and solemn Censures  
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of the Church. This was the way of old. The Fathers met in Synods, or Generall Councils, as the cause required; to make provision against Heresies, as they rose, and infected the Church.

But the late Disciplinarians have, it seems, thought the preservation of the Faith an easier work, and not of such Publick and Catholick concernment; and have therefore in their new Model ordered Heresie to be judged in the *Kirk-Session or Consistory*, where are no more then the Minister of the place, and one Lay Elder or two: As if Heresie were so small a crime, as to be fit for the cognizance of two, or three no better Judges: Or, as if any but the Clergy had power to judge of it; This is utterly a great mistake, and miscarriage; for Heresie, being at least a perversion, and so in effect a denial of some point of Faith, is a crime of the highest nature, as striking at the Churches foundation: And the Ministers alone are the Guardians of the Faith: And the Clergy in Convocation (next to a Generall Council of the whole Church) are the supreme Judges of all Controversies about it. So God himself ordained in that Church, which, of all the Churches of the first Plantation, was most troubled with Hereticks, and that was the Church of *Corinth*. 1 Cor. 14. 32.

*The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets.*

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*land.* 1640.

That is, the doctrines of private Teachers in every Church are to submit to, and so to be allowed, or condemned by the concurrent Judgement of all the Pastors of that Church, which is not to be had, but in a Council of that Church, or a Convocation. As in all sciences, and callings, the concurrent Judgement of those, whose proper employment and study they are, is the most likely, the most legall and authentick, and the *derniere* determinations. The King onely calls the Clergy together, and proposes to them, leaves them to debate, and determine: And though the Statute-Law set the temporall penalty for Heresie, yet it takes from the judgement of the Church, what Doctrines are Hereticall. A prudent, and a Christian constitution: For should the secular Power undertake without the Church to judge what is Heresie, it would give the People just reason to suspect, that it was not matter of Faith, but reason of State, that swayed the determination, which is the next way to cast all Faith and Religion out of their minds. Whereas on the other hand, a publick condemnation of Hereticall doctrines by the joint voices of them, whose cure and calling it is, must in reason have the most universall influence in any Christian Church, that is not neer its Apostasie. What is the cause, why nothing hath of late been this way done

*Primo Eliz.  
cap. 1.*

done against the many Sects and Heresies, that trouble us, I may not say : but I must needs think, that the want of it is a main reason, that they are not lessened, but rather increased : And, if this want continue long, will be followed with a diminution, and decay of the Churches power; of the purity, and stability of the reformed Religion professed in the Church of *England*; and in fine, if not redressed, with the ruine of both.

III. The third way for the suppressing of Heresie is the making, and executing of good laws for the silencing of Hereticks, and *Dis-senters* from the Faith, and hindring their practices. And herein the secular Arm is to interpose as *the nursing Father of the Church, and Defender of the Faith*. For though the Church solely denounce Hereticks, yet she hath no power now to punish them temporally, but what the Civil Magistrate invests her with : who is therefore constantly to assist her. And this not without absolute necessity ; for they are a sort of People, that have obstinacy in their very Nature, and definition, and are generally insensible of spirituall coercion. In this work the Godly Emperors of old were very diligent, as appears by severall of the ancient Laws, especially in the first book of the *code*. And, how the rules of Government come since to be so much changed, that the giving liberty



to the inveterate, and avow'd enemies of the Church, and Religion established, shall be now thought the best, and onely way to make them obedient, and fit to be trusted in the Church, deserves well to be considered. Certainly, had their practises been as well obstructed by the execution of good laws, as their opinions have been fully confuted by the writings of learned Men, there had been by this time no pretence for a debate about *Indulgence to Dissenters*. And what ever event may in point of prudence be expected from *this*; It cannot be thought, but that the many extravagant and blasphemous fancies, so freely published, in Print, in the frequent *Meetings of Dissenters*, and other ways; Opinions so repugnant to the Christian Faith, and destructive of true Piety, will now have the same malignant influence, and effect upon both, which heretofore they used to have. And will diffuse a venom too strong for any help, but that Power, which planted the Faith in its first Purity. And withall, it is to be feared, that the great dishonour done to the Majesty of God, the injuries done to our meek and most blessed Saviour, and to the most holy and sanctifying Spirit, by these blasphemous opinions, and by that wanton liberty they have of walking abroad with Publick connivence, will bring upon us a guilt



guilt and wrath from God, not to be expiated by another twenty Years suffering.

VI. The sixth means to defend the Faith is, by a dayly and constant confession of it, in all times and trials, even of death, and Martyrdom. We are taught to profess our Rule of Faith twice a day in our publick prayers: And upon good reason; For as all truth desires nothing more, then that beauty that is native to it to commend it to our belief, and best defends it self against all contradiction, when it appears most naked: So certainly, truths of so illustrious a magnitude as *the Articles of our Creed*, cannot be better preached, and maintained, then by an open, hearty, and constant profession of them. The most difficult service, which they require of us in the greatest opposition, is then but to own them, with which alone we gain an absolute Conquest over all the World, *1 John 5. 4, 5. This is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our Faith. Who is he, that overcometh the world, But he that believeth, that Jesus is the Son of God?* Our Faith is the purchase of His exinanition, and therefore *the Cross* the inseparable badge of it; not to be laid aside when God puts it upon us, without certain loss of those Heavenly Joys, that attend patient suffering for the truth, and Martyrdom; which, as it is of peculiar benefit to those, that faithfully wade through it, sanctifying

Justifying that death, which we owe to Nature for sin, and raising it as a gift of Faith, and Patience offered up acceptably to God; So it did of Old, and always will give the greatest renown to the Christian Faith and Name; being, next the Miracles wrought by God himself, the most pregnant, and visible testimony of the Power of the Holy Ghost going along with the Faith. And of this the first ages of the Church are a sufficient proof. These are some of the proper and direct ways of contending for the Faith; There are others, that come in as Auxiliaries, and serve onely by consequence. The chief of which are these two.

1. Holyness of life, Purity of mind and conscience. This is the proper vehicle of true Faith, *1 Tim. 3. 9. Holding the mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience, Cap. 1. 19. Which some having cast away concerning Faith have made shipwrack.* Long gathered habits of vertue, or vice insensibly cast the Soul into a settled state of good, or evil respectively. In which case, from the dictate of self-preservation, as all things else, it naturally seeks, and adheres to such principles, as will make good, and maintain the condition it is possesst of. If the condition be good, it appeals to Faith, as the author, and refuge of it, in the strength whereof it stands, and in the encrease of it doth triumph, and glory: If the condition  
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be evil, then Faith appears as a witness against us, and a tormentor; and the Soul cannot contemplate it without horror, but must turn aside, and betake it self to the refuge of lies, some doctrines however false, yet plausible, that may help it at present to silence the fear of a judgement to come; Which Article, and severall others, as remission of sins, the resurrection, and eternall life are absolutely inconsistent with a continuation, and security in evil courses. It is true, Faith is supernaturall Grace, infused into our Souls by God himself from above: Yet it is liable to be disturbed, yea, and ejected too by the strength of our own corruptions, and the powers of darkness reigning in us. These stifle and extinguish those motions and illuminations, whereby the holy Spirit doth usually work Faith in us; Who though he delight to dwell in Tabernacles of Clay, in the hearts of the Sons of Men, yet abhorrs and flies from the tents of the wicked, especially the proud, and the sensuall. And it is notorious in the history of the Church, that the great Heresies, that troubled it of old, had their birth from one of these, either the Ambition, or Debauchery of their first Broachers.

2. The next means, is to preserve the dignity of the Ministers of the Gospel, who are the Dispensers of this Faith. Did Christians generally

nerally found their belief, and practice upon those rules, and principles, by which they are to be measured, there would be the less need of this; But it is obvious to be observed, that men commonly begin with the esteem of a Person, or Party, and then raise their Faith according to the dictate of that Person, or Party. This the Hereticks of all ages have seen, and therefore made it their first business to worm themselves into vogue, and credit; being sure they must needs be Masters of their Faith, whose understandings their reputation had first blinded. And indeed we cannot reasonably expect, that our Doctrine should gain much upon the minds of those, that despise our Persons, or Callings: which, God be thanked, at present is not, nor lightly can be done by any, but such, in whom Atheism, or Fanaticism hath smothered, if not destroyed the power of Religion. All Nations not wholly barbarous have lookt upon it, as both the security of their Religion, and Glory of their Countrey, to have the estate of their Priesthood mainrained in honour, and plenty; And it were much to be wished, that the Reformed Churches of Christendom had not been in this point more sordid, and sacrilegious, then all other Christians, not to say Nations, in the World. We have seen verified in *England*, what was upon this miscarriage

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age in the Reformation foretold by the most learned, and judicious Writer of his rank among the Protestants, *That the time of Religion, and the Service of God would likely fall, as the age of Man, within seventy or eighty years; and what followed, would be small joy to them that beheld it.* And we are yet to pray and hope, that the little, that remains may escape, if possible, all fears and jealousies from the luxury, and profaness of the Age; The naturall issue of which vices in conjunction is the devouring of holy things, and then an open Apostasie from the Faith: Unless Gods mercy make them childless, as unlawfull embraces often prove.

I have now sufficiently tired you with a lame account of some things, in the right management whereof the continuance of our Faith is greatly concern'd: And had we hearts to make use of them with that Zeal, and constancy, which the greatness of the Cause it self, and our unchangeable concernment in it require; (and was the second part of our earnest Contention propos'd) they would not fail through Gods blessing, who never deserts the Cause of Faith, to make our Church, and People happy. But they have generally had that bad fortune, that other good things have, *to be better known, and valued from the want, then from the enjoyment, and benefit of them.* A miscarriage, which surely we have since his Majesties

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## Of the Rule of Faith.

most happy Restauration been guilty of. A miscarriage, that must from the notion, and nature of it make Mankind miserable : (all happiness consisting in the right apprehension and enjoyment of the good we are possesst of) And the more extreemly miserable, the greater *Importance and Necessity* the things themselves are of : which was the *Third member of the Text*, and hath two parts; First, *the importance of our earnest contending for our Rule of Faith*; It is the securing of the foundation, and the very Being of the Church, and the Pillars of our future Happiness, and undoubtedly of the greatest consequence. Secondly, *the necessity of it*, now the Greater, because of the restless importunity, and unrestrained licentiousness of our Adversaries; which is so visible, and causes so much complaint already, that I shall not spend time in speaking of it, nor I hope need to caution you to defend your selves against it. Yet must not forget to put you in the right way to do it; and that is, by laying at home in your own Souls a good foundation of *this Ancient, and Holy Faith*, by a diligent learning of, and resolute adhering to these Articles, to *this Rule of Faith*; as it is literally delivered in the plainest places of Holy Scripture, and comprised and explained in the three Creeds; and the Church Catechism. If we  
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## *Of the Rule of Faith.*

forſake theſe holds, there is nothing in the Chriſtian World can ſecure our Faith : Theſe we are therefore conſtantly to teach our Flocks, and they diligently to learn, and to conſider that exhortation of the Apoſtle, *Hebr. 13. 7, 8, 9. Remember them, which have the rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you the Word of God, whoſe Faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation; Jeſus Chriſt the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever: And be not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines.*

*F I N I S.*